

### **REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 55-79 are presently pending in this application, Claims 55-65, 68, 70, 72, 74, 76 and 78 having been withdrawn from further consideration by the Examiner, Claims 66, 67, 75 and 77 having been amended and Claim 79 having been newly added by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 66, 67, 71, 75 and 77 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Suga et al. (U.S. Patent 6,378,858); and Claim 73 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Suga et al. However, Claim 69 was indicated as including allowable subject matter.

First, Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the indication that Claim 69 includes allowable subject matter. However, Claim 69 is presently maintained in dependent form, because Applicant believes that Claim 67 includes allowable subject matter.

Claims 66, 67, 75 and 77 have been amended herein, and these amendments are made solely for clarification and not believed to narrow the scopes of the claims. Also, newly added Claim 79 is believed to be clearly supported by the original disclosure of the present application, for example, specification, page 18, last paragraph, and Fig. 14. Therefore, no new matter is believed to be added thereby. If, however, the Examiner disagrees, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned who will be happy to work in a joint effort to derive mutually satisfactory solution.

Briefly recapitulating, Claim 66 is directed to an image forming apparatus including an image forming device, a sheet feeding device and a pressing device. The image forming device forms an image on a sheet, and the sheet feeding device conveys the sheet to the image forming device. The sheet feeding device includes an axis, a driving gear which

rotates the axis and supports the axis at one side thereof, a gear engaged with the driving gear, a feed roller and a separation member which is pressed against the feed roller at a pressure applied between the feed roller and the separation member. The pressing device cyclically changes the pressure while the sheet is conveyed between the feed roller and the separation member such that a plurality of sheets conveyed between the feed roller and the separation member are separated and individually conveyed to the image forming device. The sheet separation member is comprised of a reverse roller upwardly and elastically supported by the axis and disposed at a free end side of the axis via a torque limiter, so as to be rotated in a sheet feeding direction and a direction opposite the sheet feeding direction. By providing such a pressing device, the pressure between the feed roller and reverse roller is varied so that double-fed sheets become less tightly adhered to each other and more easily separated. Therefore, double-feeding is more effectively reduced in this image forming apparatus.<sup>1</sup>

Suga et al. is related to a sheet feeding apparatus, but fails to teach “a pressing device configured to cyclically change the pressure while the sheet is conveyed between said feed roller and said separation member such that a plurality of sheets conveyed between said feed roller and said separation member are separated and individually conveyed to said image forming device” as recited in amended Claim 66. On the other hand, Suga et al. simply describes an image forming apparatus having a separation roller 53 pressed against a sheet feeding roller 51 by springs 73a, 73b and a spring receiver 91.<sup>2</sup> The spring receiver 91 can be disposed at a “separation position” as illustrated in Fig. 2, pressing the separation roller 53 against the sheet feeding roller 51 at a lower pressure P1. When the spring receiver 91 is positioned at a “sheet feeding position,” the separation roller 53 is pressed against the sheet

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<sup>1</sup> See specification, page 12, lines 13-20, and page 25, lines 15-27.

<sup>2</sup> See Suga et al., column 8, line 66, to column 9, line 20, and Figs. 2 and 3.

feeding roller 51 at a higher pressure P2. According to the timing chart of Fig. 9, while the sheet feeding roller 51 is feeding a sheet, the spring receiver 91 stays pressing the separation roller 53 at the higher pressure P2, unlike the pressing device of Claim 66. Therefore, Claim 66 is believed to be clearly distinguishable from Suga et al., and thus not anticipated by or obvious from Suga et al.

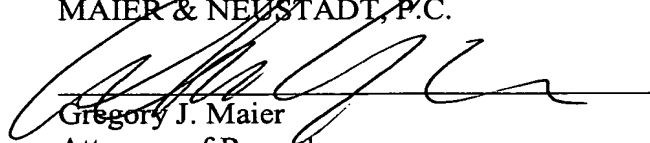
Likewise, independent Claims 67, 75 and 77 include subject matter substantially similar to what is recited in Claim 66 to the extent discussed above. Thus, Claims 67, 75 and 77 are also distinguishable from Suga et al.

For the foregoing reasons, Claims 66, 67, 75 and 77 are believed to be allowable. Furthermore, since Claims 71, 73 and 79 depend from Claim 67, substantially the same arguments set forth above also apply to these dependent claims. Hence, Claims 71, 73 and 79 are believed to be allowable as well.

In light of the prior indication of allowable subject matter and in view of the amendments and discussions presented above, Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in condition for allowance, and an early action favorable to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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